

## What is C-Diff?

The full name for C-Diff is *Clostridium difficile*. It is a type of germ (bacteria) that lives in the bowel along with many other germs that cause no harm. Sometimes, in some cases C-Diff can cause infection.

When we take an antibiotic, some of the "good" bacteria die causing the *C-Diff* bacteria to multiply and cause toxins. This can then inflame the bowel causing an infection and diarrhoea. In most cases the effects of a C diff infection are mild but it can lead to a serious illness.

## Who is at risk?

You are more at risk if:

- You are over the age of 65
- Have an immune system that is not working properly
- Have had surgery on your gut or have an inflammatory bowel disease
- Have had or are taking antibiotics or other medication that changes the bacteria in the gut

## What are the symptoms of C-Diff?

The most common symptoms are:

- Watery diarrhoea, that has an unpleasant smell
- Fever / temperature
- Loss of appetite, nausea (feeling sick)
- stomach pain/tenderness.

## How do I know I have C-Diff?

The microbiology laboratory tests diarrhoea stool samples for *C. difficile*. If you have C-Diff your doctor will let you know.

## How is C-Diff treated?

In some cases, certain antibiotics may have caused the diarrhoea so you may have to stop taking them if recommended by Doctor.

Depending on your symptoms, you may need to take some antibiotics for 10 to 14 days. It is very important that you complete the course of antibiotics even if the diarrhoea is gone and / or you feel better

It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration because of the diarrhoea.

## Is C-Diff contagious?

Yes. It can spread very easily to other people because the bacteria leaves body in a person's diarrhoea. Once outside of the body, the bacteria has a protective coating, called a spore this can survive for a long time on hands, surfaces that you have touched i.e. toilets, commodes, bed frames, door handles. Other objects and clothing and will remain there until they are thoroughly cleaned.

C-Diff can also be spread through direct contact with someone who is infected. Someone with C-Diff is considered to be infectious until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have cleared up.

## How can C-Diff be stopped from spreading?

Once the infection is confirmed by the Laboratory, the Infection Prevention & Control Nurse will tell the ward manager or nurse in charge. You may be moved to a single room with en-suite facilities to reduce the risk of the infection spreading.

A Pink sign will be put on your door. Healthcare workers looking after you will be wearing aprons and gloves when they come into your room.

They will take these items off and wash their hands before leaving. **Hand washing** is one of the key ways to control the spread of infection. Healthcare staff will wash their hands with soap and water before and after contact with you. If you notice a failure in this practice please feel free to ask them to do so.

## What can I do to help?

It is very important to tell your nurse or doctor if you have any of these symptoms, especially if you have taken antibiotics within the last three months.

To prevent C-Diff from spreading, you, and your family members should wash your hands with soap and warm water often. Especially after using the toilet and before eating. **Alcohol hand gel is not effective against *C. difficile*.**



## How to wash your hands properly

1. Wet your hands under running water
  2. Lather with soap
  3. Rub all parts of your hands, including the wrists
  4. Rinse well under running water
  5. Dry completely
- It should take around 30 seconds to wash your hands properly.

If a patient has C-Diff, we may share that information with other hospitals. The Patient should also tell their carers of the result on admission to another hospital. This will help to stop the spread of C-Diff.

### How can I contact a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team?

Tell the Clinical Nurse Manager, Doctor or Nurse looking after you if you would like to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team and they will contact us.

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication

Additional information can be found at :

<http://intranet.amnch.ie/departments/PC/Pages/home.aspx>



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PATIENT  
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LEAFLET

# C-Diff

(Clostridium  
difficile)

